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The Call To Our Red Cross

A statement on behalf of the War Council of the American Red Cross

By

H. P. DAVISON

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WASHINGTON, D. C.
May 24th, 1917

The Call To Our Red Cross.

A conference of representatives from 40 different cities, invited to Washington by President Wilson to make plans to raise the money with which to finance the Red Cross during the war, was held here on May 24th. At this conference Henry P. Davison, recently appointed by the President as Chairman of the Red Cross War Council, made a statement, setting forth the needs and opportunities of the Red Cross. He declared that to comply with even the minimum duties and opportunities of the American Red Cross would require a fund of $100,000,000. Mr. Davison said:

"The most stupendous and appealing call in the history of the world to aid suffering humanity confronts our Red Cross. Millions of men who have been fighting for liberty lie dead or wounded; millions of women and children are homeless and helpless; hundreds of towns and villages have been destroyed; disease and distress are rampant.

"Up to now, our own people have not suffered. While Europe has been pouring out her life-blood, America has experienced a prosperity she had never known before.

"But now we ourselves are in this gigantic war. We now see that the struggle against autocracy and tyranny which our Allies have been making is and has from the first been, in reality, no less our struggle than theirs. We ourselves must now share the suffering which they have endured, we, too, must bear the burdens and we must do our part in a very real way.

"Our Red Cross is a vital factor in the struggle. To promote efficiency in administering its great responsibilities, the President of the United States has created a Red Cross War Council. We of the Council know now only what the minimum requirements are. But we know already that the needs which our Red Cross can alone supply are at present beyond computation.

"Something of what we must expect to do and something of the sacrifices which we must expect to make will be indicated by the following summary of the very present situation:

"Hundreds of American doctors and nurses are already at the front. A force of 12,000 American engineers will soon be rebuilding the railroads of France. Upwards of 25,000 American men are now on the battlefields of Europe, fighting as volunteers in the Allied armies; soon, 25,000 American regulars will be added to their number. All our National Guard is to be mobilized, our regular Army is to be recruited to full strength, and 500,000

other men are shortly to be called to the colors. Within a few months we should and will have in service an army of 1,000,000 and a navy of 150,000 men.

"These men must have of our best. To prepare against their needs in advance will be a stupendous task which the Red Cross must undertake. Doctors, nurses, ambulances, must be made ready. Vast quantities of hospital stores, linen, bandages and supplies of every kind must be prepared and at once. If we wait, it may be too late. When we ask our own sons and brothers to fight for our liberty 3,000 miles from home in a country already sore and afflicted, surely we cannot do less than prepare to take care of them in their day of suffering.

"Gallant Canada from 8,000,000 population raised an army of 450,000 men. Eighty thousand are dead or injured, and Canada has raised in value $16,000,000 for the Red Cross to relieve her sick and wounded. Her Red Cross, thus vitalized by the sacrifice of those at home, has been able to save thousands from death or misery.

"Immediately our soldiers go into camp, their dependent families will becomes a problem. Obviously, in a country the size of our own, the proper and practical way to distribute both the burdens and the benefits fairly and uniformly will be through the Government itself. This is especially fitting when voluntary contributions must meet such enormous requirements in other fields. There will undoubtedly arise a large number of special cases requiring additional or unusual assistance. Such assistance should be made sys-

iematic largely through local chapters of the Red Cross.

"When our men go to France, we must not only prepare to take care of them when sick and wounded: another very serious problem will confront them and will confront us in our care and forethought on their behalf. Englishmen and Frenchmen, when, from time to time, they are relieved from their grim duties in the trenches, go home. The soldiers from other countries on the firing line cannot go home; there is no home to go to! They go to Paris. Many of them do not return from Paris as efficient soldiers as they were when they went there. Our American soldiers must have a home in France, somewhere to rest, somewhere to find a friendly atmosphere, somewhere to go for recreation and wholesome amusement. These men will be returning to this country some day. We want to make it certain that as many as possible return in health and strength, and not afflicted with disease from which our forethought might have protected them. The Red Cross must—and it alone can—become a real Foster Parent of our soldiers while they are in Europe. To perform that function well will require a large sum of money.

"The needs of France cannot but stir the heart of every American. Tuberculosis has become prevalent as a result of this trench war. And the disease is spreading. Here is a call not only to aid the brave and liberty-loving French people, but also to help make this afflicted country healthy for our own sons and brothers who are soon to be there in such great numbers.

"Some 1500 towns and villages have been destroyed in France. In her devastated regions, men, women and children are homeless and suffering for the barest necessities of life. We ought at the earliest moment to provide these peoples with the simplest essentials to begin life anew. They need clothing, agricultural implements, domestic animals, especially horses and cows, seeds, fertilizers, tools, bedding, stoves and the elementary materials with which to cover themselves by day and by night. Some idea can be formed of the amount involved in such an undertaking with the knowledge that Mr. Hoover, through his magnificent organization, has advanced for Governments and from private subscriptions $350,000,000 for relief in Belgium. If there were no thought of protection and provision for our own people in France can we hesitate to provide generously from our plenty that we may show some appreciation of our everlasting debt to the people of our sister republic?

"We should do something and do it immediately to hearten afflicted Russia. On the Russian line of 1,000 miles there are only 6,000 ambulances, while on the French front of 400 miles there are 64,000 ambulances fully equipped. Behind the lines in Russia are millions of refugees from Poland, Lithuania and Western Russia—driven from their homes by the German and Austrian armies, wandering from city to city, crowded into unfit habitations, huddled in stables, cellars and outhouses, and dying from disease due to exposure and insufficient food.

"Russia needs our trained women to instruct hers in the art of nursing; she needs enormous

quantities of the elementary articles necessary to relieve the very worst cases of pain and suffering. Probably nothing that can be done immediately will do more to win this war than to strengthen Russia. The opportunity and the duty here alone are almost without limit in extent. Our Red Cross is the one agency which can exert itself effectively in this terrible emergency.

"The foregoing are but the greater and more urgent needs of the moment. Other work of great magnitude must be done. Our Red Cross must maintain a supply service whereby all the contributions in kind which our people make can be efficiently distributed. We must organize comprehensive plans to keep the families and friends of our soldiers and sailors informed as to the wounded and missing.

"Indeed the duties and the opportunities which confront our Red Cross have no precedent in history and are not within human estimate today. The War Council, however, can make definite plans and budgets only to the extent to which it is supported by the generosity of the American people.

"At the moment, the real question is not so much how much money we need but rather how much can be spent wisely and made effective in the immediate future. The War Council, therefore, after carefully considering the matter, is certain that even to approach compliance with the most pressing needs will require at least $100,000,000.

"It is an enormous problem; it must be handled with a big heart, with a broad vision, and with

the highest business ability. The War Council regards its task as a very sacred trust and it will give to this labor of humanity the best ability at its command.

"If each individual American now contributes his 'bit,' there can be no failure. America will, we feel sure, in this again demonstrate her ability to handle a big task in a big way. That we may be able to perform this great task, we shall appeal to the generosity and for the hearty cooperation of the whole American people.

"If, in making a survey of the obligations and opportunities of our Red Cross, a gloomy picture is drawn, we must not be discouraged, but rather rejoice in this undertaking and in the confidence that we can by our voluntary action render a service to our afflicted allies which will for all time be a source of pride and satisfaction in a good deed well done. As President Wilson has said: 'But a small proportion of our people can have the opportunity to serve upon the actual field of battle, but all men, women and children alike may serve, and serve effectively.' We must and will all immediately concentrate our energies and efforts and by contributing freely to this supreme cause, help win the war."

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